

to sell their organs since they do not have any other means to pay back their bank loans. From the reply to a question put to one of the farmers who led the rally, it was learnt that they were left with no other option but to sell their vital organs. In the recent past, over 20,000 farmers have ended their lives across the country due to debt burden. At least, selling their organs would enable them to repay their debt and live for a few years more and feed their families. This is the condition of farmers all over India.

Sir, I seek an explanation from the Government in this regard.

**Demand to withdraw the decision of closing Digboi Refinery in
Assam and taking measures for its modernisation**

SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA (Assam): Sir, I would like to raise a matter of urgent concern that the Digboi Refinery, which is the oldest Refinery in the Asian Continent, established just before the World War-II, is decided to be closed down by its Management, the Indian Oil Corporation. The Refinery, the first-of-its-kind in Asia, was set up at Digboi in Assam in 1901 by the Assam Oil Company Limited. Later, in 1981, the Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (IOC) took over the Refinery and created a separate division, namely, the Assam Oil Division (AoD). This Division has both refinery and marketing operations. The Refinery had an installed capacity of 0.50 MMTPA (million metric tonnes per annum). It is to be mentioned here that its refining capacity was increased to 0.65 MMTPA by way of modernization in July, 1996. Since then, the production capacity of this Refinery has remained the same for the last 100 years. Here, because of keeping the production capacity of the Refinery confined to 0.65 million tonnes per year, this oldest Refinery has been facing a loss. Now, the management, instead of taking up adequate and urgent measures towards modernization of the Refinery and enhancing its production capacity from the existing 0.65 million tonnes, has taken the decision to close down the Refinery, which has been a matter of pride for the nation. Besides, the Digboi Refinery is playing a pivotal role for the entire North -Eastern Region. Even with its minimum production capacity, its major petroleum products like fuel, wax, bitumen, etc., have been able to meet the demands of the Region. Accordingly, with its functioning status, it has always opened a vast scope of employment among the skilled youth of the North-Eastern Region besides various commercial activities surrounded to it. Hence, the decision of the IOCL to close down the Refinery has hit the sentiments of the people of Assam, which, genuinely, creates agitation among the local people and various organizations strongly opposing the matter.

[Shri Birendra Prasad Baishya]

I would, therefore, urge upon the Government to kindly intervene in the matter and to withdraw the decision to close down the 100-year old Digboi Refinery. Similarly, I would urge upon the Government to take up urgent measures towards modernization of this oldest Refinery of the country and to enhance its production capacity instead of closing the Refinery.

Demand for clearance from Ministry of Environment and Forests to declare Bindukhatta in Nainital district of Uttarakhand a revenue village

श्री भगत सिंह कोश्यारी (उत्तराखंड): महोदय, उत्तराखंड के नैनीताल जिले में बिन्दुखत्ता नामक स्थान में विगत 60-70 वर्षों से 50 हजार से अधिक लोग निवास कर रहे हैं। वहां के 32 हजार वोटर्स विधान सभा व लोक सभा में वोट देते हैं। उन्हें स्वतंत्रता के बाद ही उत्तर प्रदेश के तत्कालीन उच्च पदस्थ शासकों ने वहां बसाया था, पर बिन्दुखत्ता अभी तक राजस्व गांव नहीं बन पाया है, जिससे वहां के लोग न ग्राम पंचायत बना पा रहे हैं और न उन्हें बुनियादी सुविधाएं ही दी जा रही हैं। इतनी बड़ी आबादी को, जिनका कोई दूसरा आसरा नहीं है, वहां से हटाना कठिन है। उक्त बिन्दुखत्ता गांव को राजस्व गांव घोषित करने के लिए केन्द्रीय वन एवं पर्यावरण मंत्रालय की अनापत्ति आवश्यक है।

अतः मेरा अनुरोध है कि केन्द्रीय वन मंत्रालय से तुरन्त अनापत्ति के निर्देश दिए जाएं।

Demand for better supervision of mid-day-meal scheme to children in schools

SHRI AVTAR SINGH KARIMPURI (Uttar Pradesh): Sir, I am raising a very serious issue about the plight of children who are taking mid-day-meals in schools under the Mid-Day-Meal Scheme. This has become more important after the death of 23 children in Bihar after taking mid-day-meal in a school. There are many violations in implementation of the Mid-Day-Meal Scheme. Firstly, the supply chain of foodgrains and its standardisation is essential, storage facilities are primitive in schools leading to contamination in many places, kitchens are non-existent, utensils are in short supply and cooks do not turn up. Teachers are, therefore, burdened with cooking. There are schools that do not have clean drinking water. Fuel is very often not available. It is not just that the funding is inadequate to supply quality food to such large numbers, but most often funds do not reach schools on time and teachers are forced to buy food to feed children. On top of this, supervision is almost negligible and Government officials do not partake to monitor whether quality of food is given. There should be a better